



# Counselor's Corner

February 2017

## Worry...but only if you want to...

*You are lying in bed at 2 AM or you're trying to pay attention in a class or at a meeting... You find yourself experiencing the same concerns about the same issues...upcoming tasks and responsibilities...snatches of unfortunate or imagined conversation...images of gloom and discouragement...restlessness and agitation. Worry, worry, worry.*

Worry involves repetitive thoughts, concerns or images. The experience is uncomfortable and becomes more uncomfortable as it continues. So, why do we worry? We often confuse worry with problem solving. In fact, worry is not productive or enjoyable. It leads nowhere and wears us out.

The fact is that worry is a bad habit. In fact, worry has little to do with the issue or content we are worrying about. You became a worrier because you have practiced over and over until the habit became routine. The good news is that if you have developed this habit, you can learn new and enjoyable habits.

Letting go of worry involves a series of steps:

- 1. Catch yourself worrying.** *"Oh, I'm worrying."* Label the habit and be glad you caught yourself. You are about to improve the quality of your life.
- 2. Ask: "Is this productive?"** If it is, you can continue. If not...
- 3. Say: "Is this worrying comfortable?"** If not...
- 4. Disconnect the issue from the worry.** First focus on the habit of worrying. The issue may be real but worry is not a strategy for solving issues.

**5. Let the worry float away.** Imagine that worry is a black balloon you suddenly find in your hand. Release it and watch it float away over the horizon. Find an image or metaphor that works for you.

**6. Do something else.** Do you know what is more productive than worrying? Anything!

Think about things you enjoy thinking about.

Picture yourself doing things that bring you satisfaction.

Think about things for which you are grateful.

Think about someone or something that will make you laugh.

Letting go of worry will take practice, practice and more practice. You might have to repeat these steps over and over. You will have to work to enjoy yourself. At times any of us can encounter situations or stressors that overwhelm us or interfere with our everyday life activities. Seeking a counselor to assist us would be appropriate.

Adapted from: *Worry...but only if you want to...*

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